



## Where should I go to enjoy rockhounding, prospecting and fossil hunting on the Nez Perce-Clearwater?

There are no areas on the Forest set aside for garnet or gemstone digging, but plant fossils can be found in the Oviatt Creek area on the Palouse District.

Additional prospecting and rockhounding information can be found through local gem and mineral clubs as well as rock shops.

### Nez Perce-Clearwater National Forest Mineral

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General Guidelines for Prospecting, Rockhounding, and Mining on Lands of the Nez Perce-Clearwater National Forest*	
If your operation:	You will need:
Will cause little or no surface disturbance (e.g., gold panning, fossil hunting, and rockhounding)	No permit – although some restrictions may apply depending on the area <b>Check with Ranger District</b>
Will involve collecting less than ½ ton of flagstone, rubble, sand, gravel, or similar material by hand for personal (non-commercial) use	A Personal Use Mineral Material Permit Available at Ranger Districts (prices vary)
Uses a small sluice or rocker box	<b>Contact minerals personnel</b> and possibly Submit a Notice of Intent
Uses a suction dredge with up to a 5 inch intake nozzle and/or with an engine rating up to 15 horsepower	<b>Submit a Notice of Intent</b> and provide a current copies of approved IDWR Recreational Dredging Permit (Form 3804-A) and EPA NPDES General Permit (No. IDG-37-0000)
Uses a suction dredge with greater than a 5 inch intake nozzle and/or with an engine rating above 15 horsepower	<b>Submit a Plan of Operation</b>
Uses motorized earthmoving equipment and/or will cause significant surface disturbance	<b>Submit a Plan of Operation</b>
*Depending on location and scope of your operations, USFS environmental analysis may be required and/or additional agencies may be involved and require additional permits.	
IDEQ: Idaho Department of Environmental Quality – Lewiston Office (208-799-4370)	
IDWR: Idaho Department of Water Resources - Cd'A Office (208)-762-2805)	
IDL: Idaho Department of Lands – Boise Office (208-334-0200)	
BLM: U.S. Bureau of Land Management - Cd'A Office (208-769-5000)	



# Recreational Prospecting

## on the Nez Perce-Clearwater National Forests





## What is rockhounding, prospecting, and fossil hunting?

Rockhounding involves the discovery and collection of small quantities of rocks, gems, or other geologic materials for personal use.

Prospecting is searching for valuable minerals. This can include collecting hand samples of mineralized rock, gold panning, using metal detectors, and operating small sluices or dredges.

Forest Service mining regulations listed in the Code of Federal Regulations (CFR) 228 govern rockhounding and prospecting activities. A good CFR website is:  
<http://www.gpoaccess.gov/cfr/index.html>.

Fossil hunting allows the collection of petrified wood and a small number of invertebrate fossils for personal use. Invertebrate fossils do not have an internal skeleton. It is illegal to collect vertebrate fossils. The rules for petrified wood collection are found under CFR 228, Subpart C.

Be advised that it is illegal to collect historic cultural artifacts, such as arrowheads, old bottles, etc. on state and federal lands.



### ABANDONED MINES

Many abandoned mines exist on the Nez Perce-Clearwater NF. These mine sites and workings are extremely hazardous and underground entry is not recommended unless authorized by a Plan of Operations.

**STAY OUT AND STAY ALIVE!!!**

## DO I NEED A PERMIT?

Prospecting, rockhounding, and invertebrate fossil hunting usually do not require a permit when there is little or no disturbance to the environment. However, a notice of intent (NOI) should be submitted to the District Ranger if there will be obvious disturbance to the environment. Based on the information provided in the NOI, a Plan of Operation (POO) may be needed. For example a POO may be required if you plan to:

- Use explosives
- Use power equipment for excavation
- Drive vehicles off open roads or trails
- Clear or remove vegetation
- Store petroleum products or hazardous or flammable material on site
- Camp in a dispersed site for more than 18 days

See this website for further POO and NOI information:

[http://www.fs.fed.us/geology/locatable\\_minerals.html](http://www.fs.fed.us/geology/locatable_minerals.html)

Also see the General Guidelines table in this brochure.

Forest users should be sensitive to how their activities impact the environment. Rockhounds and prospectors need to carefully refill and revegetate any excavation, no matter how small. Consideration should also be given to possible cumulative damage when you do the same thing year after year in the same place.

Water quality and fish habitat are critical concerns on National Forests, so activities in or near streams must be handled with care.

Any sale or commercial use of fossils or mineral materials collected on National Forest System Lands requires a permit.

## Is *ALL* National Forest land available for prospecting?

NO. Some areas may be excluded, even from non-commercial activities. Examples include:

- Wild and Scenic River corridors
- Historical or archeological sites
- Campgrounds
- Wilderness Areas
- Administrative sites
- Environmentally sensitive areas
- Areas "withdrawn" from mineral use

It is always a good idea to check with the local Ranger District to identify closed areas before you start. In addition, you may not work on someone else's "mining claim" without their permission. Mining claimants have exclusive rights to all minerals on those sites. Mining claim location information can be found through your local BLM office or at: [www.blm.gov/lr2000](http://www.blm.gov/lr2000).

## Are there any special restrictions that apply to suction dredging?

YES. The Nez Perce-Clearwater recognizes the Idaho Department of Water Resources Recreational Dredge Permit and the Environmental Protection Agency National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System Permit for small suction dredge placer miners in Idaho. These permits allow for suction dredges with up to a 5 inch intake nozzle and/or with an engine rating up to 15 horsepower to be used in designated areas at designated times throughout the State of Idaho. A copy your approved IDWR Letter Permit (Form 3804-A) and EPA NPDES General Permit (IDG-37-0000) must be submitted to the Forest Service. It is also recommended to submit a NOI.